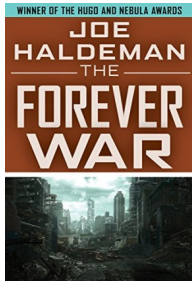




Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians



The Forever War
By Joe Haldeman
Discussed March 2001

Discussion Questions

1. *The Forever War* was written in 1974, almost 30 years ago, what technological innovations did Haldeman predict for Mandella's time that have come to pass? What innovations are still not here? Did Haldeman succeed in predicting the future with *The Forever War*? What are some examples of other works in the genre that have successfully predicted the future?
2. How did Haldeman deal with homosexuality in the book? Was he clearly homophobic or clearly homophilic? What do you think of the idea of people considering homosexuality antisocial, an emotional dysfunction? What about his use of slang to refer to heterosexuals?
3. In describing the temporal situation of the soldiers, the Commodore says "Most of you are too young to remember the term future shock. Back in the seventies, some people felt that technological progress was so rapid that some people, normal people, couldn't cope with it; that they wouldn't have time to get used to the present before the future was upon them." What do you think of the concept of "future shock"? Do you think Haldeman portrayed this concept successfully in the situation between the soldiers and the universe around them?
4. Another classic genre work in a similar vein is *Starship Troopers* by Robert Heinlein. How do these two books compare?
5. Both *The Forever War* and *Starship Troopers* by Robert Heinlein utilize the concept of superhuman combat armor/suits. Do you think this is a real possibility for future wars? Do you think this is the likely way we would fight an alien war? Why or why not?
6. How have the covers of various editions of this book differed? What are the different images portrayed? Which do you feel is most appropriate? Least appropriate?
7. Mandella discusses the origin of his name at one point. Do you think that Haldeman chose an appropriate image to relate the main character to?
8. Mandella starts in the year 1997 and goes through the year 3143. What does Haldeman extrapolate from current trends in 1974?

9. It seems that by 3143, man has conquered every disease or malady that could befall us, they can replace lost body parts and even internal organs. A person can live virtually forever. What are the advantages and drawbacks of living in such a society?
10. What is the sense behind the sergeant's comment that "the army plans in terms of centuries"?
11. Who is Haldeman's intended audience for this book?
12. This book was written in 1974. What did Haldeman predict would happen to people from the sixties?
13. Haldeman is a veteran of the Vietnam War and has been very up front about that being his inspiration for *The Forever War*. Where do you see the ties to the experiences of the Vietnam War? Do you think the book read differently for people who lived through Vietnam and people who did not?
14. Other than a statement about the futility of war, what themes are in this book and exhibited by the characters?